

Utah is 5th in the sharing of rides

But only 2.3% use mass transit; U.S. average is 4.7%

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Utah is fifth in the nation for the percentage of commuters who carpool but below the national average when it comes to drivers who prefer transit to their car, according to a report released Wednesday by the U.S. Census Bureau.

Census data from 2005 show that 12.8 percent of Utah commuters said they carpool to work, compared with 10.7 percent of commuters nationally. A total of 2.3 percent of Utahns take mass transit, compared with 4.7 percent nationally.

The state was just below the national average of 77 percent for the number of people who said they drive solo to work, with 76.5 percent of Utah drivers traveling alone.

Nationwide, about 87.7 percent of commuters said they like to drive to work. Meanwhile, about half of the nation's transit users were found in 10 of America's largest cities, including Chicago, New York, Boston and Washington, D.C. These cities also had high rates of transit use, according to the report.

The report was compiled with data from the American Community Survey, a nationwide poll conducted by the Census Bureau. About 250,000 people were contacted each month in 2005 to contribute to data in the survey. The margin of error for the survey ranged from 1.7 percent to 0.1 percent, with data from each state surveyed having a different error margin.

Chad Saley, spokesman for the Utah Transit Authority, said his agency was pleased with the transit and carpooling numbers, especially considering Utah's population when compared to other states.

"It is obviously exciting to be ranked that high in both the carpooling and the transit-use numbers," he said. While below the national average, Utah ranked 18th for transit usage.

Washington, D.C., had the highest number of transit users, at 37.7 percent, while New York ranked second, at 25.8 percent. Hawaii had the highest number of carpoolers, at 15.6 percent, and Alaska ranked second, at 15.1 percent.

The report can be found at: factfinder.census.gov. Once at that site, scroll down and click on the link that says "get data" under the heading that says American Community Survey.